



Speech by the President of Ukraine at the All-Ukrainian Orthodox Unity Council

15 December 2018 - 15:52



Your Eminence,

Your Eminence - distinguished representatives of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew!

Your Holiness!

Your Beatitude!

Honorable Bishops!

Dear members of the Council!

Fellow Ukrainians!

By the will of God, we convened in St. Sophia a thousand years after the temple was built by the efforts of Yaroslav the Wise, consecrated and the divine service was conducted here for the first time.

The heirs of Baptism convened here, which the Holy Prince Volodymyr took from the Constantinople Mother Church. Again, as then, there are envoys of the Ecumenical Patriarch with us, who supports our dream of spiritual freedom.

Over a thousand years it has been confirmed more than once: in order to establish statehood, Ukraine should get rid of the chains that enslave us spiritually, that divide us and make us free or non-free performers of the others' will.

A century ago, during the Ukrainian National Liberation Revolution, Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi and Symon Petliura initiated the path of Ukraine to the Autocephalous Orthodox Church. And many events that proved this great aspiration also took place in these walls of St. Sophia, or on the square along those walls.

Independent Ukraine worships great ancestors and remembers their will. Today, everything is ready for us to fulfill this will. We take the last step on the millennial path to the holy and great purpose.

I want to remind that today's Unity Council was preceded by the long-lasting efforts of both spiritual and secular authorities, as well as millions of Ukrainian Orthodox people. Over several decades, we not only prayed, but also built church structures, which are now the foundation of an independent and recognized Ukrainian Church.

I would like to point out here the role of Viktor Yushchenko, who is with us in this hall and who then initiated an intensive dialogue with the Mother Church.

After the forced pause of 2010-14, these negotiations were resumed, right after the first days of my presidency. They lasted several years, until during the Easter meeting of the President of Ukraine with His All-Holiness the roadmap was agreed upon, which brought the process to the finish line.

The Constantinople Mother Church implements its mission according to the canons - introduces the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine as equal among equal to the family of Autocephalous Orthodox Churches. The Ecumenical Patriarch finally declared the Moscow annexation of the Kyivan Metropolitanate, committed in the late XVII century, illegal. His All-Holiness declares that the Russian Orthodox Church has no canonical rights to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. And that our Orthodox Church is not subject to the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church.

I emphasize that Ukraine was not, is not and will not be a canonical territory of the Russian Church!

In April, immediately after returning from Constantinople, after creating the roadmap agreed upon with His All-Holiness, I addressed the Ukrainian Parliament to support my appeal to His All-Holiness about giving us autocephaly. I also want to thank Mr. Andriy Parubiy, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, who is present here, for a more than convincing parliamentary support for the President's appeal. This is extremely important on our way!

In November this year, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate approved the text of the Tomos granting independence to the Ukrainian church and made a decision to convene the Unity Orthodox Council. Our Council, historic Council.

Thanks again to everyone who believed that it is possible, to all who fought for it, to everyone who was not afraid.

To everyone who rejected their own ambitions for this day to come true and for the church to be created. Thank you very much!

With deep gratitude, we bow to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for his incredible care for Ukraine. We see that His All-Holiness embodies great courage and wisdom.

I am grateful to everyone who convened today on the square in front of the St. Sophia's Cathedral. They gathered at about 8 am and waited hours and hours in the cold. Because they are not observers, they are also founders of our new church. These are believers of various Ukrainian churches. And I want to emphasize that we are united realizing that a great state-building issue is being resolved now. And I want to say to those who came: you are direct participants in the formation of the Ukrainian independent church. You, those who came today to the square, who are in the Cathedral of St. Sophia, create the Ukrainian history right here, right now. You will bring good news about the creation of the Autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Please, tell everyone about this historical event.

The issue of autocephaly is an issue of our Ukrainian national security. This is an issue of our Ukrainian statehood. Finally, we gain spiritual independence, which can be compared with gaining political independence. We cut off the chains that bind us to the empire. We return to our God-determined path and go our own way.

I appeal directly to all of you, members of the Council, to the hierarchs of churches. This is a colossal responsibility that lies with you at these times. The state, I stress, did everything it could. Now, the future of Ukraine, the future of our great nation, our freedom, our state and spiritual independence depends on you only. You must approve the Statute. You must choose the Primate, and the Tomos is already waiting for the Primate in Fener. So everything depends on your ability to agree, on your ability to hear each other, to hear for Ukraine's sake.

We all remember the words of St. Apostle Peter: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble!". So, for the sake of the Lord and Ukraine, make intelligent, judicious decisions.

I believe that you are the right people at the right time and in the right place. I wish the Unity Council a successful job.

Glory to the Lord and Glory to Ukraine!



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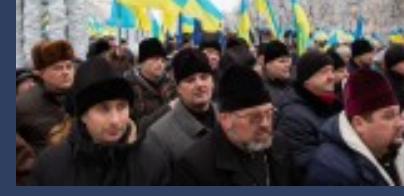
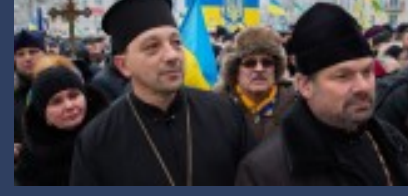
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